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ABSTRACT

Revisions in standards for Oregon's public elementary and secondary schools have led to changes in state requirements governing high school graduation requirements. This manual suggests guidelines for school districts to follow in granting diplomas or alternative awards. It discusses the meaning of a diploma under Oregon law, school districts' options on graduation requirements, suggested alternative degrees for students meeting some but not all diploma requirements, and special considerations for handicapped students. Included are sample school board policies and procedures for early and delayed graduation, as well as sample forms for diplomas and alternative awards. An appendix gives the full text of the new state regulation on graduation requirements. (RW)

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT
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Standards Guidelines

THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND ALTERNATIVE AWARDS OAR 581-22-316

June 1980

Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway SE
Salem, Oregon 97310

FOREWORD

In February the State Board of Education adopted revised standards for Oregon's public elementary and secondary schools. For the most part, the changes reflect a need for more precision and clarity learned from several years' experience with these Oregon Administrative Rules.

The guidelines on the following pages address OAR 581-22-316, Graduation Requirements, and look at issues surrounding the diploma. Please keep in mind that the guidelines were developed in response to pressing questions from districts, and will receive further refinement as we gain more experience in the area of diplomas and alternative awards. Districts are free to use or modify the suggestions in these guidelines to best suit local needs.

Department of Education guidelines which speak to other standards issues include:

Units of Credit

Competence Requirements

Selecting Textbooks

Questions should be directed to the Department of Education, 378-3569, or toll free in Oregon 1-800-452-7813.

Verne A. Duncan
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND ALTERNATIVE AWARDS

The Standard

> **Graduation Requirements**
> **581-22-316** Each district school board with jurisdiction over high school programs shall award diplomas to all students who fulfill all school district requirements and all state requirements as described in the following sections and in district school board policies. A school district may award an alternative document to a student who has met some but not all of the graduation requirements....

(See page 19 for the entire rule.)

The Meaning of a Diploma

By tradition, the high school diploma has represented student readiness to pursue postsecondary studies; employers have relied upon it as an indicator of an applicant's ability to perform on the job. To the local community, the diploma has meant that students have met certain requirements--that their formal schooling has prepared them for entry into a world of adult responsibility.

Employers, postsecondary schools and parents have been questioning these assumptions, however. In response to concerns about the credibility of the diploma, the State Board of Education imposes specific graduation requirements. To receive a diploma, the student must meet minimum requirements for attendance and units of credit earned; the student also must have demonstrated competence in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening and reasoning.

To be awarded a diploma, the student must fulfill all district and state requirements for graduation in the areas specified in OAR 581-22-316. Briefly stated, these are:

- Unit of credit requirements in specific areas and electives
- Competence requirements in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening and reasoning
- Attendance requirements for twelve years, or equivalent, beginning with grade one.

While these requirements help build confidence in what the diploma represents, there remains the question of what should be done about students who are denied the diploma. For example:

- Will achievement of specific graduation requirements go unrecognized?
- Does denial of a diploma mean that the school will give no recognition for twelve years of attendance?

There are options available to districts that address these and other issues.

Local Options

State standards permit districts to exercise options through board policy or administrative action, depending on the specific requirement. (See sample policy statements, beginning on page 7 of these guidelines.)

Units of Credit*

- The number of required units may be increased.
- The number of elective units may be increased or decreased as long as the total number of units of credit for graduation equals or exceeds 21.
- Credit may be granted for experience prior to grade nine, as long as 21 units of credit are completed while the student is enrolled in grades nine through twelve.

Competence

- Individual student competence in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, listening, and reasoning may be verified through alternative means to meet individual needs as long as the district's standard of performance is not reduced.

Attendance

- Provisions may be made for early or delayed completion of units of credit and competence requirements.
- Daily on-campus attendance in a regular course may be altered using other types of learning experiences (e.g., credit for off-campus experiences and credit by examination).

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*A unit of credit is earned through the equivalent of 130 clock hours of instruction.

Recognizing Accomplishments

- A document other than a diploma may be issued to a student who meets some but not all graduation requirements. However, the district may not indicate that a document was awarded the student for participation in a special education program.*

Decisions concerning such alternative awards have been left to the school districts, leading to the issuance of a variety of documents throughout the state. To provide for more consistency among districts, the following documents are suggested:

1. Diploma--Awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed all state and local requirements for units of credit, competence and attendance. (See Form A, page 14.)

2. Modified Diploma--Awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program for units of credit, competence and attendance, but have not completed all requirements for a diploma. (See Form B, page 15.)

3. Certificate of Attainment--Awarded to students who have completed some but not all requirements for a diploma or modified diploma as recorded on the students' transcripts and summarized on the "Summary of Performance." (See Form C, page 16.) It should be noted that in this case the student's transcript is essential to provide a record of the student's achievement.

The Graduation Ceremony

Districts must determine who shall be involved in the graduation ceremony. District policy should clearly state who may be included and under what conditions the opportunity to participate may be denied. The nature of the awards given to students should be carefully explained.

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*See ORS 343.295.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HANDICAPPED STUDENT

Definition

"Handicapped students" refer to all persons under 21 years of age who, due to mental, physical, emotional conditions, or learning disabilities, require special education services in order to obtain an appropriate education. Conditions include, but are not limited to: mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or other health impaired children, individuals who are pregnant, or children with specific learning disabilities.

Individualized Opportunities

Public Law 94-142 reinforces the principle that each student's educational program must be tailored to meet individual needs, with sufficient opportunity provided to meet all state and local requirements for earning a diploma. Each student should receive appropriate recognition for that which has been earned at the conclusion of the schooling experience. The district should communicate clearly and as early as possible with the parent concerning the student and the program, as well as the options and kinds of recognition open to the student.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. May handicapped students be given a diploma?

   Answer: Yes. The handicapped student may receive a diploma if all state and local requirements are met. If the student fails to fulfill all state and local requirements, the student may be given an alternative award. However, the document may not indicate that it was earned in a program for the handicapped. (Ref: ORS 343.295.)

2. May means of verifying competence be altered to accommodate unique needs of handicapped students?

   Answer: Yes. Though a student competence requirement may be verified through alternative means to meet individual needs, district standards of performance must not be reduced. For example, "speak" and "listen" are included in the competence requirements to encourage the development of communication skills. When a student's speaking or listening capacity is impaired, competence requirements could be measured in terms of "sending and receiving information." Again, such alternatives or substitute skills must be at a comparable level of difficulty as the indicators for which they are substituted.

3. Is it the intent of the Oregon Department of Education that students not earning a diploma or alternative award be excluded from the graduation ceremony?

   Answer: No. This is strictly a local district decision.

4. Is a district violating antidiscrimination statutes if it withholds diplomas from handicapped students who have not completed district requirements for a diploma?

   Answer: No. This is not discrimination. The handicapped student, as with other students, should be given an opportunity to earn a diploma, but the district may award diplomas to only those students who have met all state and district requirements.

5. Must high school students enrolled in organized special education classes earn the 21 units of credit required by state standards?

   Answer: Yes. Units of credit must be earned in areas of study specified by the standards. Each unit must represent 130 clock hours of instruction, but the district may choose the content to be included. Elective units may be earned from among the regular electives offered by the school, or from electives developed to meet each student's need.

SAMPLE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FORMS

Policy and Procedures

Early and Delayed Graduation Requirements; sample form.

(See also Department of Education guidelines, Unit of Credit, for sample policies regarding: Credit for Alternative Experiences, Off-Campus Experiences, Credit by Examination, Independent Study.)

Forms

Award Form A, Diploma

Award Form B, Modified Diploma

Award Form C, Certificate of Attainment

> Reminder:
>
> The samples on the following pages are suggestions only; districts may alter them to best serve local conditions.

SAMPLE DISTRICT POLICY FOR
DIPLOMAS AND ALTERNATIVE AWARDS

DIPLOMAS AND
ALTERNATIVE AWARDS

A. Authority

OAR 581-22-316
District policy number _____.

B. Policy

A diploma will be awarded to each student who has satisfactorily completed all state and local requirements for units of credit, competence, and attendance.

A modified diploma will be awarded to each student who has satisfactorily completed an educational program prescribed for the individual, for units of credit, competence, and attendance.

A certificate of attainment will be awarded to each student who has completed some but not all requirements for units of credit, competence, and attendance, as recorded on the student's transcript and summary of performance.

C. Rationale

All students should receive formal notification of their status with the school when they graduate or otherwise choose to leave _____ Public Schools. Such notification is part of the school record which schools are required, by law and school district policy, to maintain.

D. Procedures

Each building principal or designee shall administer the presentation of diplomas and alternative awards, including:

a. Determination and notification of students eligible to receive diplomas and alternative awards.

b. Development of appropriate ceremonies and/or procedures for the presentation of diplomas and alternative awards.

EARLY AND DELAYED GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Authority

"Twelve school years shall be required beginning with grade one, except when the school district adopts policies providing for early or delayed completion of all state and school district credit and performance requirements." (See OAR 581-22-316(3).)

B. Definitions

Early graduation: the completion of all requirements for graduation in less than twelve years.

Delayed graduation: the completion of all requirements for graduation in more than twelve years.

C. Rationale

The increasing diversity of learning opportunities available to high school students now makes it possible for some students to complete graduation requirements in less than twelve years. On the other hand, for some students, more than twelve years of school experience may be equally desirable.

Both educational and personal considerations suggest that most students should remain in the public schools through twelve years while completing graduation requirements. Premature transition to post-high school experiences may require career skills, or academic maturity beyond that which students ordinarily possess at the end of grade eleven. Enrichment experiences available within the high school during the senior year and off-campus experiences may complement school course work, fulfill graduation requirements, and enhance the student's growth in the areas of vocational choice and community service. Nevertheless, early graduation and in some instances delayed graduation are appropriate and desirable for a limited number of students.

D. Procedures

Early graduation from high school may be permitted provided that:

1. The parents request early graduation in writing after personal conference with the school counselor and/or principal. (See the form on page 13.)

2. There is a demonstrated educational or vocational purpose to be achieved by the early exit, or the student is over the age of compulsory attendance.

3. Requests and planning occur one year* prior to expected graduation in order to permit completion of all district requirements.

4. The parents, student, school and other agency (college or employer) agree on the plans.

Delayed graduation may be considered for the following reasons:

1. The student desires and is able to demonstrate further development in the educational program.

2. The student has not met the graduation requirements as prescribed by the school district board.

3. The student wishes to reenter school after an absence.

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*Optional, to be determined by district policy.

SAMPLE
EARLY GRADUATION
FORM

EARLY GRADUATION*

Name (legal) _____ Age _____ Date _____

Address _____ Home Phone _____

Parents Name _____ Home Phone _____

Parents Address _____ Business Phone _____

Desired graduation date _____

Reason for request and plan for accomplishing early graduation.

Method of acceleration; i.e., correspondence, night school, college, on-site, post-high school plans, credit by examination, employment.

Counselor Evaluation of Transcript.
(Credits needed, requirements met, courses to be taken.)

Counselor Conference Recommendation: Date _____

Parent Conference: Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Administrator Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Representative of Participating Agency (if appropriate)

_____ Date _____

*The form for delayed graduation is the same.

SAMPLE PRACTICES
FORM A, DIPLOMA

_____ HIGH SCHOOL

_____, Oregon

This Certifies That

_____

has satisfactorily completed all state and district credit, competence and attendance requirements and is therefore awarded this

DIPLOMA

Given this ___ day of _____, _____

_____
Chairman of the Board

_____ Superintendent

_____ Principal

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SAMPLE PRACTICES
FORM B, MODIFIED DIPLOMA

_____ HIGH SCHOOL

_____, Oregon

This Certifies That

_____

has satisfactorily completed an educational program prescribed for the individual and is therefore awarded this

MODIFIED DIPLOMA

Given this ___ day of _____, _____

_____
Chairman of the Board

_____ _____
Superintendent Principal

SAMPLE PRACTICES
FORM C
CERTIFICATE OF ATTAINMENT

_____ HIGH SCHOOL

_____, Oregon

This Certifies That

_____

has completed requirements as indicated

on the attached Summary of Performance

and is therefore awarded this

CERTIFICATE OF ATTAINMENT

Given this ___ day of _____, _____

_____
Chairman of the Board

_____ _____
Superintendent Principal

NOTE: This form is to be attached to the student's Certificate of Attainment.

SAMPLE SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

_____ School District
_____ High School
_____, Oregon 97___

SUMMARY OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENT PERFORMANCE

Student Name_____ Date_____

Requirements referred to in this document are those defined by the Standards for Public Schools, adopted in 1980 by the Oregon State Board of Education, and additional requirements approved by the Board of Education of this school district.

COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS

The student has met or exceeded the competence requirements established by state and local school district requirements.

Reading	_____
Writing	_____
Mathematics	_____
Speaking	_____
Listening	_____
Reasoning	_____

All competence requirements have been met.

_____
Date

Performance indicators that represent each competence requirement are available for inspection upon request.

CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

The student has met or exceeded the credit requirements established by state and local school district requirements.

Language Arts	[]	3 units
(written composition or equivalent)	[]	
Mathematics	[]	1 unit
Science	[]	1 unit
U.S. History	[]	1 unit
Global Studies	[]	1 unit
Government	[]	1/2 unit
Health Education	[]	1 unit
Physical Education	[]	1 unit
Career Development	[]	1/2 unit
Personal Finance and Economics	[]	1 unit
Applied Arts, Fine Arts or Foreign Language	[]	1 unit
Electives	[]	9 units
	Total	21 units

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

The student has attended school for the periods of time specified in state and local school district requirements.

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Grade 9	[ ]	[ ]
Grade 10	[ ]	[ ]
Grade 11	[ ]	[ ]
Grade 12	[ ]	[ ]

Should school attendance be terminated prior to completing all requirements for graduation, the student is encouraged to seek counseling from one of the following:

1. _____ High School Counseling Service, phone _____.
2. _____ Continuing High School Counseling Service, phone_____.
3. _____ Community College Counseling Office, phone_____.

Counselors at these locations will be helpful in planning a program to complete the graduation requirements. Both night and daytime classes and activities are available.

Note: This is not an official transcript of student performance, but is a summary issued to the student at the time he/she leaves the school program. With the written approval of the student (or when appropriate, the guardian), an official school transcript may be obtained from the high school.

Graduation Requirements

581-22-316 Each district school board with jurisdiction over high school programs shall award diplomas to all students who fulfill all school district requirements and all state requirements as described in the following sections and in district school board policies. A school district may award an alternative document to a student who has met some but not all of the graduation requirements.

(1) Unit of Credit Requirements

(a) Each student shall earn a minimum of 21 units of credit to include at least:

(A) Language Arts—3 (shall include the equivalent of 1 unit in Written Composition)

(B) Mathematics—1

(C) Science—1

(D) U.S. History—1

(E) Global Studies—1

(F) Government—1/2

(G) Health Education—1

(H) Physical Education—1

(I) Career Development—1/2

(J) Personal Finance and Economics—1

(K) Applied Arts, Fine Arts or Foreign Language—1 (one unit shall be earned in any one or a combination).

(b) A district school board with a three-year high school may submit through the waiver process alternative plans to meet unit requirements.

(c) A district school board may increase the number of units required in specific areas, and may increase or decrease the number of elective units; however, the total units of credit required for graduation shall not be less than 21.

(d) A school district may grant high school credit for experiences prior to the ninth grade which are equivalent to high school courses within the school district; however, the granting of such credit cannot reduce below 21 the units of credit to be completed in grades 9 through 12.

(e) Planned course statements shall be written for courses in grades 9 through 12 and shall be available to students, staffs, parents, the district school board and other interested individuals.

(2) Competence Requirements

(a) Each student shall demonstrate competence in:

(A) Reading

(B) Writing

(C) Mathematics

(D) Speaking

(E) Listening

(F) Reasoning.

(b) Student competence:

(A) Shall be verified by measurement of student knowledge and skills or measurement of student ability to apply that knowledge and skill;

(B) May be verified through alternative means to meet individualized needs; however, the school district's standard of performance must not be reduced: and

(C) When verified in courses, shall be described in planned course statements; challenge tests and/or other appropriate procedures for verification of competence assigned to courses must also be available.

(c) In developing curriculum and criteria for verification, school districts should be guided by levels of performance required in life roles.

(d) Competence in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening and reasoning shall be recorded on students' high school transcripts. Competence, when verified prior to grade 9, shall be recorded on high school transcripts.

(3) Attendance Requirements

(a) Twelve school years shall be required beginning with grade 1, except when the school district adopts policies providing for early or delayed completion of all state and school district credit and performance requirements.

(b) The district school board may adopt policies for alternative learning experiences, such as credit by examination and credit for off-campus experiences.

(c) With any modification of the attendance requirements for graduation, school district staff shall consider age and maturity of students, access to alternative learning experiences, performance levels, school district guidelines and the wishes of parents or guardians.